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Inside Information

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BLOCK'S CONFERENCES TARGETED

Targeting audiences with increasingly more sophisticated telecommunications equipment is becoming almost routine at USDA's Office of Information.

Recent radio/telephone press conferences by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block on dairying and grasshoppers are current examples of the system.

John Ochs, Block's press secretary, called up Jim Johnson, chief of OI's Radio and Television Division, to say that the Secretary had a statement to make about dairying...the next day. Could Johnson set up a radio/telephone press conference with the appropriate farm broadcasters?

Johnson selected states with high dairy production: Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York, California, and Pennsylvania.

Three or four staff members phoned farm broadcasters in those states and invited them to participate in the conference. The event was also to be shared with dairy magazine editors, so Kate Alfrend, of OI's News Division, called a list of writers.

When the designated number of 30 editors and broadcasters had been contacted, the list was turned over to OI's Video and Film Division, which operates the Department's new teleconferencing facilities, which Johnson uses for these telephone press conferences.

As broadcasters called the bridge the next day, their ports, or positions on the bridge were noted, so that when Ochs asked for a question from a specific reporter, the technician knew which switch to throw.

When grasshoppers were the topic, Margaret Desatnik and Gary Crawford, public affairs specialists on Johnson's staff who make a lot of these calls, picked out several western states and invited their farm broadcasters to participate.

Idaho has a big problem with grasshoppers but only one designated farm broadcaster. So Crawford called news directors at other stations in that state as well, and invited them to join in the conference.

When television (or satellite) press conferences are held, anyone with the right equipment can access the telecast.

Overseas targeting is discussed on the next page.

WORLD VIEWS U.S. FARM SCENE

Reporters from Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Sydney, Australia, interviewed Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block May 13 -- and everybody stayed in their respective home cities. Block's end of this two-way audio, one-way video interview was telecast to target countries in Southeast Asia.

Early feedback on use of the interview material in broadcast and print media, in English and other languages, was "good," reports Don Elder, public affairs specialist in the Radio and Television Division of USDA's Office of Information. Elder is USDA's representative to WORLD NET, the television equivalent of the Voice of America, and produced by the United States Information Agency.

This was a "first" for USDA, though the Department has been providing WORLD NET a basket of features from USDA's "A Better Way" television series, produced by Elder, since last fall.

Jim Johnson, Elder's chief, notes that this is a good way to get more mileage out of television production efforts.

PUB'S MANAGER NAMED IN MASSACHUSETTS

Pamela Garlick has been named publications manager of the Massachusetts Extension Service.

Her suggestion for a seminar on exhibits is now being actively considered by George Baka, chief of the Design Division of USDA's Office of Information.

RESEARCH BOOK AVAILABLE

A paperback that he describes as "the only compilation of educational materials published by all of the international agricultural research centers, has been brought to our attention by Tom Hargrove, editor and head of the communication and publications department, International Rice Research Institute, The Philippines.

The book is "Publications on International Agricultural Research and Development," a 539-page compilation of titles concerning Third World agricultural science and production.

Steve Berberich, of ARS Information in Beltsville, Maryland, notes the book is available through Agribook Store, International Agricultural Development System, 1611 N. Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209, for \$7.70 plus \$2.50 handling.

MISSOURI NEEDS INSTRUCTOR

The University of Missouri-Columbia has an opening for an instructor or assistant professor with broadcast media responsibilities.

By June 15, send resume to: Richard L. Lee, Director, Extension Information, 1-98 Agriculture Building, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri 65211. His telephone number is (314) 882-2480, his Dialcom address, AGS1355.

McCLUNG CITES PUBLICATIONS CREDO

A credo to help USDA agencies (or anyone else for that matter) cut publications costs was suggested by John M. McClung, director of USDA's Office of Information, at the eighth annual communications workshop held May 21-22 at the National 4-H Center, Chevy Chase, Md., just outside Washington, D.C.

The workshop was sponsored by the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) and USDA's Office of Information.

McClung suggested agencies adopt this credo:

"We will publish only those things our constituents need, have an interest in, and cannot obtain elsewhere. Moreover, each of those publications will be of the highest possible quality and will reach the intended audience in a cost-effective manner."

Since OMB's moratorium (on publications) went into effect in 1981, McClung said, USDA has eliminated some 1,400 publications.

"But we still have a long row to hoe" he said. "According to some recent estimates, at the present rate of spending for the first six months of fiscal year 1985, USDA's printing costs are estimated to increase by approximately \$750,000 for the entire fiscal year."

"On top of that, the Government Printing Office projects an increase in printing costs of 5-6 percent this fiscal year and next. These increases are based on expected upswings in the cost of labor, paper, storage, distribution, and other related factors."

"Clearly, something needs to be done -- and quickly."

The most critical stage in a publication's production, McClung said, is when it's a gleam in the writer's eye.

"This is the time," he said, "when you've got to know who your audience is and if, in fact, you HAVE an audience."

"Is USDA really the appropriate source for the publication?" McClung said should be asked.

"If the private sector can do it or already has done it, why should we?" he said.

"This is the stage where the agency publications review committee has got to be hard-nosed."

"The government can no longer afford to publish something simply because it seems like a good idea, the administrator likes it, or a certain agency program thinks it needs more exposure," he said.

Tom Palmer, a Washington-based freelance writer who shared a panel with McClung, Jaia Barrett, of the Association of Research Libraries, and Timothy Sprehe, of the Office of Management and Budget, said he believed USDA has done a good job in cutting back on publications, but that he would like to see more cutbacks.

Barrett, on the other hand, said that "if the government is using my tax dollars on information, it should share that information with me."

She said research results must be disseminated if they are to be useful and effective.

Sprehe said he believes there is too much dissemination of information on paper and urged more use of electronic dissemination. He noted that USDA is a leader in this field.

McClung also suggested consideration of the National Technical Information Service, teleconferences, as well as radio and television.

Focus of the workshop was doing a better job of communications with smaller staffs and reduced budgets.

Helen Thomas, of United Press International and dean of the White House correspondents, was keynote speaker.

ACE TO INSTALL NEW OFFICERS

Patricia G. Loudon, deputy director of information of Extension Service, USDA, will be installed as President of Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) during the organization's national conference in Alaska June 22-28.

Others who will assume their national offices then include:

Don M. Springer, head of the Department of Agricultural Communications at Texas A&M University, president-elect.

Joe Marks, professor and news director at the University of Missouri, vice president.

Mark T. Allen, of Lansing, Michigan, board member for retirees.

Norman L. Newcomer, agricultural editor, New Mexico State University, board member for the Western Region.

Lorraine B. Kingdon, communication specialist at the University of Arizona, board member from the Western Region.

Diane O. Connor, press officer with USDA's Forest Service, board member from the DC Region.

Thomas E. Waldinger, assistant vice president for public affairs at The Fertilizer Institute, Washington, D.C., board member for associate members.

USDA RESPONDS TO OMB DRAFT CIRCULAR

Responding to the Office of Management and Budget's draft circular on information published in the March 15 Federal Register, John M. McClung, director of USDA's Office of Information, replied, in part:

The Department was founded in 1862 to "acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word."

"A major role of USDA and its agencies is to collect and develop information which is shared with the public as well as with its own agencies and other Federal and State agencies and institutions."

Other aspects of his comments dealt with Freedom of Information and Privacy laws.

VISITOR COMPLEXES ARE IN DESIGN

Two visitor complexes in California are being designed by USDA's Office of Information for the Forest Service.

OI's Design Division is working on an interpretive and orientation exhibit for the Placerville Nursery and new outdoor and indoor exhibits for the Lake Tahoe Visitors Center.

Another, large visitor center is under consideration for Mono Lake in the same state.

Meanwhile, the visitor center at the Cradle of Forestry in North Carolina burned to the ground recently. Plans are underway for temporary exhibits until the center can be rebuilt. Fortunately, fire didn't damage the historical buildings there, the site of the first American school of forestry.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

